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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3293  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5540  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3260  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3125  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3783  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1086  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3798  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001031

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN : PRESIDENT MIFFED AT UNAUTHORIZED CARWASH;  
TWO EMPLOYEES SACKED

11. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: During the last weekend, a staff member of the Cabinet of Ministers made a working visit to the "Turkmenistan Airlines" National Civil Aviation Agency, whose activity he oversees in his Cabinet capacity. After arriving in his personal car, he ordered the Agency's Deputy Minister's driver to wash his car at the organization's yard. Unable to refuse the order from a high level official, the driver washed the car. President Berdimuhamedov was driving past the Agency at that time and noticed a private car being washed at the state organization's yard. The outcome: the Cabinet employee and the driver were sacked; and the Minister and Deputy Minister of Turkmenistan Airlines have allegedly been reprimanded for allowing such an incident to take place at the Agency. Although the story spread by word of mouth and was not covered by local media, it appears that it was intended as a lesson for officials not to abuse their power. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) On Sunday, August 9, an employee of the Cabinet of Ministers overseeing the activity of "Turkmenhowayollary" (Turkmenistan Airlines) National Civil Aviation Agency visited the Agency. (Note: Turkmenistan's government agencies' top officials unofficially work on weekends. End Note) Arriving at the Agency in his private vehicle, he ordered the Turkmenistan Airlines' Deputy Minister's driver to wash his car in the Agency's yard. Not daring to refuse the higher authority representative, the driver was washing the car when President Berdimuhamedov drove by the Agency and noticed a private car being washed on the state agency's premises. After presidential staff found out whose car it was, President Berdimuhamedov called in the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers for Transport and Communications, Nazarguly Shagulyev to see to the matter. As a result of the incident, the Cabinet employee who ordered his car to be washed and the driver who did the washing were both fired. The Minister and Deputy Minister of Turkmenistan Airlines were allegedly reprimanded for allowing the incident to take place on

the premises of their organization.

¶4. (SBU) Everyone who is aware of the story feels pity for the driver, who was dismissed as a result of the incident. He was not in a position to refuse the order of the higher authority, Cabinet staff member. If he had refused, he would have been "punished" by his own boss for not complying with the order of the "big boss." As an Ashgabat resident familiar with the story said, "the poor driver fell victim of the incident for just being at the wrong place at the wrong time." He added that the driver did the washing to avoid trouble, but instead lost his job by following orders.

¶5. (SBU) President Berdimuhamedov is known for making surprise visits. In the past, while he was Minister of Healthcare and Medical Industry, Berdimuhamedov used to pay surprise visits to hospitals and medical establishments to check the discipline, order and sanitary condition of hospitals. According to an Embassy local staff person, after one such visit, a doctor at one of the Ashgabat hospitals was fired for wearing tennis shoes during work hours instead of wearing special footwear. With its headquarters located close to the Presidential Office, the Aviation Agency's administration should have expected to be in the President's field of vision. Even more so the Cabinet employee, who was aware of both the president's penchant for surprise visits and his habit to work on weekends. However, the Cabinet staff member's awareness of this fact did not keep him from abusing power, showing his arrogance and his supremacy over an

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ordinary driver.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: The incident served as a good lesson for all state employees not to abuse their power for personal benefit, no doubt contributing to its wide distribution via the grapevine. It no doubt serves the president's interests that he has this reputation, encouraging state employees to always be on alert that the head of state may pay a surprise visit to their organization or simply drive by and notice their wrongdoings. END COMMENT.

MILES